

Here are some of the submissions from our seventeenth Invite to Write  
inspired by *A Starry Night, Arles* by *Vincent van Gogh*:



### **My Grandmother's Tea Cup**

My whole world as a child  
was in that cup.  
The embrace of warmth.  
The smell of cinnamon.  
The skill of receiving.

The sip,  
taught me cherishing.  
The colour of milk and tea gifted me comfort.  
The thrill of knowing I would see,  
such a signal,

that would nudge me further  
into explorations of the  
tenderness of life.  
The exquisite effort of allowing  
warm tea to move  
from lips to tongue.  
The feeling of my body  
puddled and relaxed.

The beauty of the tea waves,  
as they rhythmically hid and  
revealed:  
a star on the bottom of my  
Grandmother's tea cup.

I unpack today.  
A star in the middle of earned wisdom.  
I am Skilled now in giving.  
In the countenance of my own anguish.  
The brightness of rising from Persephone's territory.

The ripeness of When: to give the cup.  
The tea cup.  
For my own Granddaughter,

who has heard the story many times.  
Waits with imagination and joy.  
For her own Grandmother;s cup  
with a star at the bottom.  
To be revealed  
in her own timing of tea waves.

-Wendy Golden Levitt

### **The Sentinels**

The spring sun has fallen beneath the treetops.  
The palms and magnolias have become dark and radiant.  
They have been turned to forms, shadows shining,  
not only silhouettes; their texture flows in and out of light,  
green darkness against the maize sky.  
They stand glowing, still, swaying slowly,  
guardians of the sky and coming night,  
they call out more nearly to what is here:

a lone dandelion,  
patches of dying grass,  
and grass still glistening with life.

They sound what is near back to their perch  
along the world's twilight edge,  
now turning to face the vast, burgeoning sea,  
night-blue with starglow,  
and now turning toward the other worlds.  
They send out their call again,  
each a lighthouse  
to stand above the sea,  
to cast messages from home  
into the reach of imagined stars.

Thus we behold the spring, the twilight,  
the gathering of great distance into nearness.  
We witness the passing of pale light into sea,  
into the gaping silence of the horizon,  
the chilling quiet  
of what has always already been here,  
waiting.

-Matthew Fishler

## **Starry Night Quartet**

I. I saw that painting!

*We were there, right?*

walking along arm in arm

in the cold windy night?

*The stars were there, right?*

We looked up occasionally.

It seemed like a painting

of a cold windy night.

And then your phone rang and

We both paused, afraid

if you responded the night,

the painting, the stars

would vanish and

We would be blotted out.

II. It's so great to lie

on your back

on the grass

in your yard

with your Dad

and look at the stars.

Dad worked in a factory.  
Mom worked at home.  
I went to school and  
on weekends we played  
in the back yard with stars.

III. There's an app for that.  
It locates me in the galaxy,  
superimposes the constellations  
so that I can relate  
to something relatable  
like people and animals  
even if they're superimposed  
on stars that are all dead.  
We worship dead stars here,  
and anticipate the new ones.

IV. What will happen when  
kids can't see stars anymore  
b/c the skies are too clogged  
---- or their heads are ----  
and the wondrous nights  
are left unattended?

-Jennifer Fendya

## **Under a Star Studded Sky**

Stars flicker, opening a portal of heart,  
if one chooses to travel inside.  
The ticket, a prayer or two whispered inside voice.  
The destination, tranquility, wisdom and laughter.  
Get quiet in breath to listen. To ride the wave towards harmony.

A trip needed to regain begins quickly below moon.  
A journey, to meet ancestors perhaps who have wisdom.  
A different excursion each night,  
as one flies into heart with intention  
intention, to understand ones purpose  
under a star studded sky.  
Under a star studded sky.

- Star Blossom

“THE FUTURE OF ALMOST INVINCIBLE DIFFICULTIES”:  
ON VINCENT VAN GOGH’S “*STARRY NIGHT OVER THE RHÔNE*”

for Gisela, who saw the Milky Way that night

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*When I have a terrible need of - shall I say the word – religion –  
then I go out and paint the stars.*

- Vincent van Gogh

1.

Your paintings of stars speak not  
of religion but an unrequited need  
to feel God reach out, touch you,  
bless you and salvage  
your half-foundering reason.

From what dark reaches of the psyche  
did your desperate need for stars

guide you to where there were none  
amid the mapless regions of disarray.

2

This canvas is not a celebration  
of an exquisite starlit night, gaslights  
shimmering on the rippling river,  
lovers lost in love dreaming  
of a tender future meandering  
toward pain, toward joy perhaps.

This is the icon of agony,  
of journeying through a terrible region  
lit only by your turbulent brush.

3.

“It’s better to have a gay life of it  
than commit suicide,” you wrote.

You were less than two years away  
from killing yourself.

And a million million stars  
were unable to stop you.

### **Children of the Universal Fire**

Be re-minded, dear friend —  
Your life is fourteen billion years  
In its making.

It has been that long  
Since the primordial fire first burst forth,  
Expanding the space of the universe  
And gathering itself  
Into innumerable spheres  
Of inhuman powers and brilliance.

Hundreds of millions of years  
Passed, and those first stars  
Consumed themselves  
Of their own volition,  
Until they burst forth again,  
With the elements of our bodies.

Their death also begat  
More stars, our sun being one.  
His simple presence  
Gives light to our eyes,  
Awakening us  
To the mystery and the majesty  
Of this our world.

And when he passes out of sight,  
Darkening the immensity above,  
We watch and ponder  
His twinkling brothers and sisters,  
Who have arranged themselves  
In eternal patterns  
That light the way of our dreams  
And foretell the arc of our stories.

Do be re-minded, friend --  
Your body is stardust,  
Your soul sunshine,  
Your visions constellations.

All of you,  
Yes all of you,  
Is of this universal fire.

- R. Douglas Saxon

### **Starry Night**

Neurons glower on the velvety darkness of the celestial carpet,  
Sending pulses of Re, rays of light--from light,  
along the axon of her longest dendrite  
A stretched sciatica, Geb's root, Thoth's delight.

Meanwhile, Cassiopeia, on her heavenly throne,  
Pays tribute to the dreams of days past  
Granting, fusing, scattering the bulbs of thought

And no-thought, through the collective window  
Of the mortal race.

Nüt stretches out her limbs, wide and tight,  
Also embossing the velvety skin with diamonds.  
Lapiz Lazuli softens up its shell and melts profusely, joining in the  
Gem-fest of her body.

Nüt, Nacht, Night, and Nuit,  
A molten Lapiz Lazuli  
A café-trottoire,  
A set of rolling hills,  
A house with a yellow-thatched roof,  
All awaken, with delight  
To be tattooed on a canvas of one starry night.

- Roula-Maria Dib